



Symbol of Class Alliance

Genesis of the NDR

The Hammer and Sickle emblem of the communists was invented in Russia in 1917. **It is a symbol of class alliance between two distinct classes: proletarian workers, and peasants.**

Peasants often work hard and they are often poor, but they are not the same as the working proletariat of the towns. Nor are they the same as the rural proletariat. So the hammer and the sickle are not two identical things. They represent two different things, allied.

Practical politics is always a matter of alliance, and in different circumstances, different alliances are called for. Communists commonly regard an alliance between workers and peasants as normal. Proletarian parties have likewise, in the past, often attempted class alliances with (other) parts of the bourgeoisie against feudalism, or against colonialism.

Alliances are normal and necessary, in order to isolate and thereby to be able to defeat an adversary; and equally, to avoid being isolated and defeated by that adversary. Karl Marx had practiced class alliance from at least 1845 onwards, and had written extensively about it, notably in “[The Class Struggles in France](#)”, the [1850 Address to the Communist League](#), and the “[18th Brumaire](#)”.

The question of the appropriate alliances in the anti-colonial and anti-Imperialist struggle was bound to arise.

The origin of the specific type of class alliance that is nowadays referred to by the term **National Democratic Revolution** can be precisely located in the Second Congress of the Communist International (2CCI), in the discussion in the Commission on the National and Colonial Question, reported to the plenary by V. I. Lenin on 26 July 1920 (attached).

The first, founding Congress of the Communist International (“Comintern”) had taken place in March, 1919, a little over a year after the October 1917 Russian Revolution. It fulfilled the tenth of Lenin’s “**April Theses**”: “*We must take the initiative in creating a revolutionary International*”.

The very first “International Working Men’s Association”, of which Karl Marx had been a founder member in 1864, had been disbanded in 1871 after the fall of the Paris Commune.

The Second International fell apart in 1914, when most of the Social-Democratic workers’ parties backed the bourgeois

masters of war in the conflict between the Imperialist powers.

The communists, led by Lenin, had held out against that betrayal. After the revolutionary victory in Russia they lost very little time before constructing a Third, Communist International. It was naturally and explicitly anti-Imperial and anti-colonial, and at its Second Congress (the “2CCI”) in 1920, decisively so.

In his report to the 2CCI on the National and Colonial Question, Lenin says:

*“We have discussed whether it would be right or wrong, in principle and in theory, to state that the Communist International and the Communist parties must support the bourgeois-democratic movement in backward countries. As a result of our discussion, we have arrived at the unanimous decision to speak of the **national-revolutionary movement** rather than of the ‘bourgeois-democratic’ movement. It is beyond doubt that any national movement can only be a bourgeois-democratic movement, since the overwhelming mass of the population in the backward countries consist of **peasants who represent bourgeois-capitalist relationships**... However, the objections have been raised that, if we speak of the bourgeois-democratic movement, we shall be obliterating all distinctions between the reformist and the revolutionary movements. Yet that distinction has been very clearly revealed of late in the backward and colonial countries...”*

Here we find, for the first time, all the makings of the NDR, including the name, even if the words are not quite in their

present-day order. Lenin calls it “national-revolutionary”, but he makes it very clear that he is talking of a democratic class alliance with anti-colonial, anti-Imperialist elements of the national bourgeoisie in colonial countries.

The 2CCI was followed within two months by the famous “[Congress of the Peoples of the East](#)”, in Baku, in the southern part of what was soon to become the Soviet Union. This was the first international anti-colonial conference. It had huge consequences. The remainder of the 20th century was marked by world-wide National Democratic Revolutions according to the pattern set by Lenin and his international comrades.

These National Democratic Revolutions included, and still include, the South African NDR.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [Report on National and Colonial Question, 2CCI, 1920, Lenin](#).
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